

House Democrats

End of Session Report

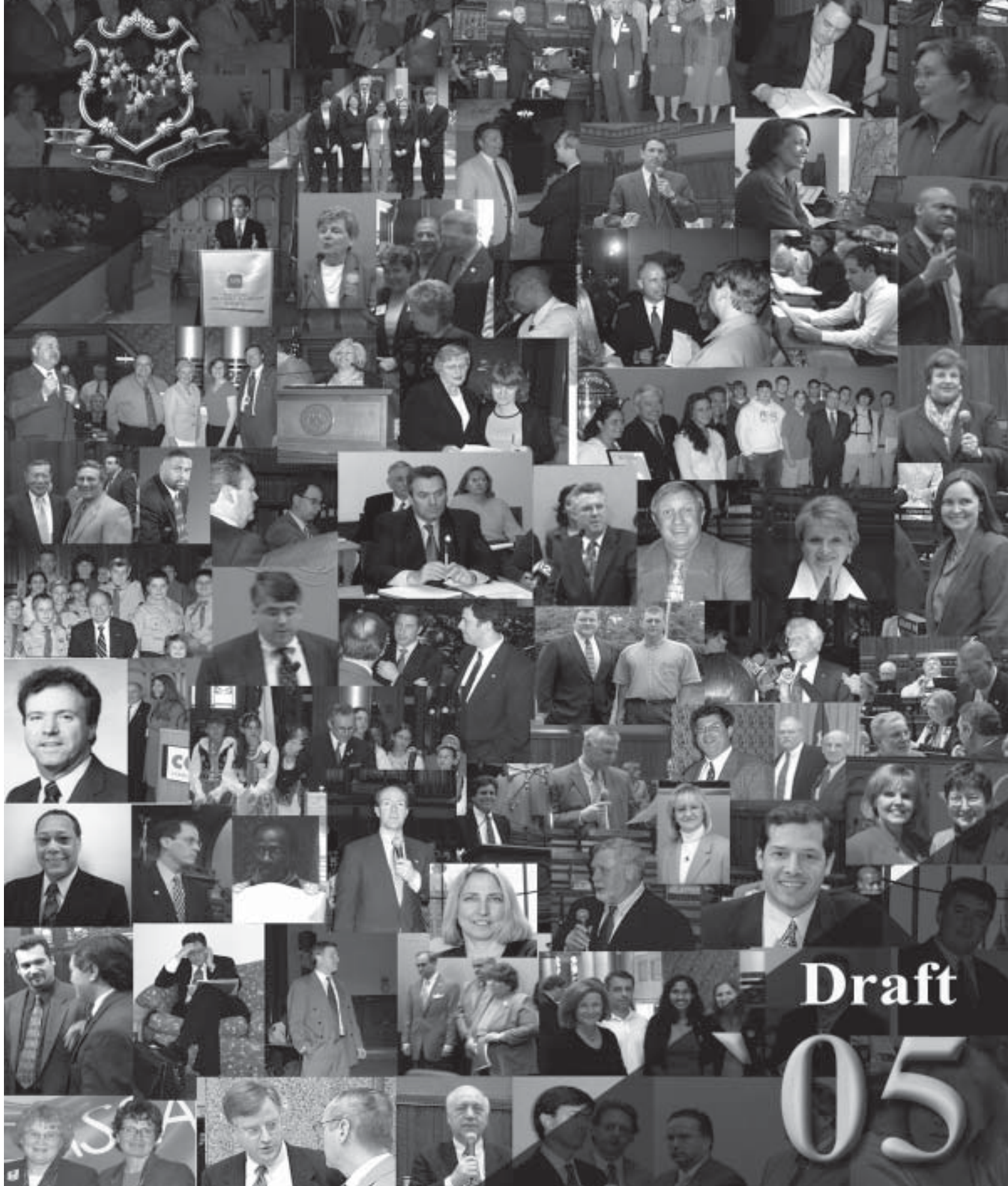


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DISCLAIMER

This end of session summary represents the bill status as of 10:00 p.m. on June 8, 2005. Please note that while these bills may have been alive at the time of this printing, their status may have changed prior to sine die. The summaries are not intended to be a full analysis of the bill but merely an overview.

PLEASE VERIFY THE STATUS OF EACH OF THESE BILLS
PRIOR TO USE.

INTRODUCTION

The 2005 legislative session was historic for both what we accomplished and what we debated. We began in January with our *Blueprint for Connecticut* outlining our caucus priorities. Healthcare, education, campaign finance reform, and a fair and balanced budget topped that list.

When it came to funding our state budget, we successfully fought to stop tax increases on the poor and middle class. Despite proposed tax hikes by the Governor on alcohol, cigarettes and gasoline, our caucus stood strong and said “no” to this regressive “nickel and dime” approach to raising revenue. Instead, we found a more fair and equitable way to balance the budget by taxing estates in excess of \$2 million.

At our insistence, HUSKY health insurance for the working poor was saved from the Governor’s chopping block, ensuring healthcare coverage for thousands of children and their families. We also made good on last year’s promise to invest in the future health of our citizens by funding stem cell research. This investment holds great promise for potential cures of a variety of diseases, and will contribute to our economy through new business growth in bio-medical research.

To help stem the skyrocketing cost of medical malpractice insurance faced by doctors, we adopted a series of reforms intended to reduce the number of frivolous lawsuits and improve court efficiencies with such cases.

We took the time to focus on the future of our children by ensuring increased funding in education for our cities and towns. This will not only help improve educational opportunity throughout the state, but will also help provide local property tax relief. Significant investments were also made in School Readiness, Charter Schools and Higher Education, reflecting the importance of maintaining our state as one of the best educated in the nation.

Because of the illegal activities of the previous governor, state contracting and campaign finance reform also emerged as top priorities. Bipartisan support for public financing of elections and the elimination of special interest political contributions has the potential to position Connecticut as the state with the most sweeping campaign finance reform measure in the nation. In addition, legislation revamping the state contracting process will provide oversight and transparency to the awarding of state contracts. This should go a long way toward helping to improve public trust in government.

Early on in the session we also tackled two major social issues. We became the first state to proactively approve same sex civil unions. And, with Connecticut’s first execution pending in 45 years, we debated and upheld our state’s death penalty statute.

After five quick months, the success of the 2005 General Assembly is clear. Together, as a team, we developed a “*Blueprint*” of priorities, and our committees came forth with proposals that reflected the will of the caucus and the needs of the citizens whom we represent.

IDENTITY THEFT

This year, legislators took action on a bill that addresses two growing problems across the state and around the country. First, crimes against banks – including robberies, check fraud, and check trading schemes – have been growing at an alarming rate. Legislators corrected an outdated portion of state privacy laws to permit Connecticut financial institutions to participate in secure information network sharing programs across the country. These programs enable law enforcement to tie together isolated bank fraud incidents and locate a pattern of events. Second, this bill brings state privacy law in line with the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act. Potential victims of identity theft will be able to obtain important bank information from financial records in which all or some of the fraudulent activity may have taken place. As technology evolves, the problem becomes more insidious, but this legislation will take several steps toward providing constituents with protections from identity theft.



PA 05-62 (HB 6831) - AA PREVENTING BANK FRAUD AND IDENTITY THEFT

PROTECTING CONSUMERS FROM ABUSES IN THE MAKING AND COLLECTION OF INCOME TAX REFUND ANTICIPATION LOANS

The General Assembly passed legislation this year that protects consumers from abuses in the making and collection of refund anticipation loans (RALs) and improves the disclosure requirements for RALs. The motivation for this legislation involves recent cases in which individuals have gone to tax preparers who offer to taxpayers the right to get a loan on their anticipated refund from their tax return. If the return is delayed, the individual could bear an interest rate as high as 80% or 90% for a debt that could last several years. This interest rate is exorbitant and unfriendly to consumers, so the legislation sets a two-tier cap to protect consumers in these instances.

PA 05-107 (HB 6830) - AN ACT PROTECTING CONSUMER FROM ABUSES IN THE MAKING AND COLLECTION OF INCOME TAX REFUND ANTICIPATION LOANS

House Democrats Achieves Its Blueprint for Connecticut

At the beginning of the 2005 legislative session, House Democrats made a commitment to improve the quality of life of the people of the state of Connecticut. The adoption of the budget and tax package more than accomplishes that goal.

For too long, we have neglected the needs of our cities and towns, forcing property tax increases all across our state. This year we have included \$142 million in increased town aid over the biennium, a 6% increase over last year. Increased funding includes Educational Cost Sharing (ECS), Special Education, Town Aid Road and PILOT funding for state property and colleges and hospitals.

The difficult economic times of the past few years have been particularly tough on the most needy in our state. We are happy to report that we have made great strides in restoring the essential programs our citizens need.

The HUSKY health care plan for adults has been restored for people up to 150% of the Federal Poverty Level, allowing access to health care for over 30,000 people. The proposed \$3 co-pay for prescription drugs and the \$3 co-pay for doctor visits for Medicaid recipients has been eliminated and health and food stamp benefits for legal immigrants have been restored.

For the first time in nearly 15 years, the pass-through of the Federal COLA for the blind, aged, and disabled is included. Also, a Behavioral Health Partnership for children and their families is included.

One of Connecticut's most successful prevention programs for families, Nurturing Families has been expanded to include all hospitals in the state. Two new respite programs – one for teen girls and one for families – have been created.

Our commitment to education remains a strong one. In addition to the ECS and Special Education funding, we have provided funding for the largest expansion of the school readiness program since its creation. We also increased funding for magnet and charter schools and increased funding to UConn, CSU, and RCTC.

In addition to these very important issues, this budget addresses myriad needs for our State:

- An additional \$750,000 has been added from the surplus for the "Save the Sub Base" effort (a total of \$1.5 million)
- There will be no bus fare increase
- \$250,000 has been included for an Autism pilot program
- \$2.3 million has been added in each year for additional Transportation Strategy Board projects
- Preservation of state funding for many of our most popular tourist attractions
- The Summer Youth Employment Program has been restored.



A modest tax increase was necessary to help fund these programs. At the beginning of the session, it was our goal to adopt a tax package that did not place a large tax burden on the poor and middle class. We worked with the Governor to eliminate her proposed alcohol and cigarette taxes and replaced them with an estate tax on estates valued over \$2 million. We also imposed a small surcharge on Connecticut's corporations.

In an effort to provide assistance to our veterans, we exempted 50% of federally taxable military retirement pay from the state income tax beginning in 2008. The exemption applies to federal retirement pay to retired members of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and Army and Air National Guard.

As we continue to struggle with rising property taxes, we have increased the property tax credit on the state income tax in income year 2006 from \$350 to \$400.

We also exempted the sale of textbooks and related workbooks to private occupational school students, and boat brokers' charges for selling boats on behalf of boat owners.

CHILDREN



COURT JURISDICTION IN JUVENILE MATTERS

This year, the General Assembly passed legislation that correctly makes children and sixteen- and seventeen-year-old offenders eligible for status as a "youthful offender" in the juvenile justice system that better affords them the needed rehabilitation prior to successful reintegration into home communities. The youthful offender status would be available to young people unless they are charged with one of eight serious felonies or have already been convicted of a felony or serious juvenile offense. Young people under youthful offender status would have the incentive to complete programs and maintain good behavior. As a result, their court and police records would be erased when the age of 21 is reached.

HB 5215 (Passed both, House A) - AAC COURT JURISDICTION IN JUVENILE MATTERS

REGIONAL CHILDREN'S PROBATE COURTS

Too often children finding themselves in the children's probate courts are not properly identified early on and, as a result, end up in the juvenile justice or mental health systems without receiving the necessary services. This legislation, based on an enormously successful experimental program that opened in July 2004 in New Haven, would make the regional probate court permanent and establish six more regional children's probate courts under the same model. Thanks to this important legislation, these courts will be both efficient, by hearing more children's cases, and effective, by linking children and their families with support early on so their problems are less likely to progress and spiral out of control.

HB 6747 (Passed both, House A) - AAC REGIONAL CHILDREN'S PROBATE COURTS

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT PROCEEDINGS

This legislation establishes a due process – of notice, hearing, and appeals procedures – for individuals whom the Department of Children and Families (DCF) finds reasonable cause to believe are responsible for neglecting or abusing a child. Reports have been released involving the discharge of persons working with children due to complaints of abuse or neglect that were substantiated without affording any prior notice or hearing of due process. The bill requires that individuals be adequately informed of their inclusion on the Child Abuse and Neglect Registry, of the potential adverse consequences of inclusion, and of their rights to appeal the complaint of abuse or neglect.

HB 5057 (Passed both, House A) - AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT PROCEEDINGS

INVESTIGATIONS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Under this legislation, the time frame available to the Department of Children and Families would be extended from 30 to 45 days in order to complete investigations of child abuse and neglect proceedings. The extension would enable the department to conduct more complete and thorough assessments, particularly in cases that are complex and involve multiple parties. In addition, the department would possess sufficient time to complete the necessary interviews with family members and the child victim, those suspected of abuse or neglect, and service providers.

PA 05-35 (HB 6788) - AN ACT CONCERNING INVESTIGATIONS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CHILD POVERTY COUNCIL

Under this legislation, the Office of Policy and Management is charged with developing a protocol requiring state contracts for programs aimed at reducing poverty for children and families to include performance-based standards and outcome measures. This provision would ensure these contracts are applied as efficiently and intelligently as possible. Another section would encourage greater utilization of the federal earned income tax credit to public and private entities that have frequent contact with low-income families and will enhance financial literacy and self-sufficiency programs. This effort would be conducted under the Labor Department in cooperation with the Department of Social Services.

HB 5482 (Passed both, House A) - AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CHILD POVERTY COUNCIL

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ASSISTANCE FOR DEFENSE MANUFACTURERS' SUPPLIERS

As news of the proposed closure of US Naval Submarine Base-New London in Groton ricocheted across Connecticut, the entire General Assembly and the Governor immediately took action to address the situation. A bi-partisan effort, the General Assembly joined the fight to save the base by providing \$10 million in bonding for necessary infrastructure improvements that would enhance the base's versatility and strategic importance to our national security.



Facing a highly competitive, ever-changing marketplace, small- and medium-sized manufacturers that support Connecticut's large defense contractors now will have access to \$1 million in advanced training in new technologies, new facilities and equipment through the new collaborative center at the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT).

PA 05-143 (HB 5907) - AAC ASSISTANCE FOR DEFENSE MANUFACTURERS' SUPPLIERS

THE LAND BANK AND LAND TRUST PROGRAM

Connecticut enjoys a thriving real estate market; however, many working families struggle to pay rent, save for a down payment on a first home, and put food on the table. HB 6726 provides nonprofit organizations an additional option to transfer property acquired under the Land Bank and Trust Program to another nonprofit that provides housing units to very low-, low- or moderate-income families.

HB 6726 (Passed both) - AAC THE LAND BANK AND LAND TRUST PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND COMMERCIALIZATION ADVISORY BOARD

To compete effectively in the global marketplace, Connecticut companies need better access and easy implementation of new technologies and innovations needed to keep up with changing demands. Responding to the needs of Connecticut's small and medium sized manufacturers, the General Assembly passed HB 5910 to facilitate strategic coordination and increased synergy to put new, innovative technologies into the marketplace more expediently.

Working in collaboration with other state agencies, UCONN, the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), Connecticut Innovations, Inc (CII), and the Connecticut Development Authority (CDA) must develop a plan and budget to foster technology transfer, the mechanism that scientists, researchers, and business use to apply research to industry. The plan must include how to endow university chairs in targeted areas, attract leading academics, aggressively pursue federal grants, spur private investment, utilize corporate sponsored research, establish an innovation center tied to a university, promote links between entrepreneurs, innovators, venture capitalists and investors. The recommendations must be submitted by January 1, 2006 to the Labor, Commerce and Education Committees. \$40 million in existing resources may be used to implement the plan.

HB 5910 (Passed both, House A) - AAC ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INNOVATION NETWORK FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Now Titled: AAC RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND COMMERCIALIZATION ADVISORY BOARD

EXPANDING ENTERPRISE CORRIDOR ZONE ELIGIBILITY

Connecticut's once vibrant manufacturing towns continued to see jobs disappear over the last few years. To jumpstart our local economies, promote our highly-skilled workforce and entice new businesses to locate here, the General Assembly passed HB 6499 to expand the Enterprise Corridor Zone eligibility to towns suffering from continued job loss and industries shutting their doors. In particular, this new criteria will provide economic development opportunities to the Torrington and Winsted corridor, two communities that in the last year have struggled to stay economically competitive after losing one of Connecticut's oldest tool manufacturers. Designation as an Enterprise Corridor Zone allows manufacturers and certain businesses that build or expand facilities or create new jobs to qualify for property tax abatements and tax credits.

In addition, HB 6499 allows communities designated as Public Investment Communities (PICs) and distressed municipalities that previously qualified for Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grants to choose between continuing eligibility for STEAP funds or qualifying for Urban Act dollars. Both programs grant funds for economic development, environmental protection, housing, transportation, and social service projects.

It also expands programs in Derby, Ansonia, Naugatuck, and Beacon Falls.

HB 6499 (Passed both, House A, Senate A) - AAC CERTAIN PUBLIC INVESTMENT COMMUNITIES AND ENTERPRISE CORRIDOR ZONES

THE POWERS OF SPECIAL DISTRICTS

The General Assembly passed legislation to include implementing tick control measures as one of the permissible purposes for voters to establish a special district within their municipality to raise funds to address needs within the district. This addresses the negative health implications of ticks.

Effective upon passage

PA 05-106 (HB 6475) - AAC THE POWERS OF SPECIAL DISTRICTS

PLANS OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The General Assembly passed legislation that promotes consistency in state, regional and municipal plans of conservation and development. HB 6570 begins the process of incorporating the principals of "smart growth" into all levels of planning. The bill generally restricts state funding for growth-related projects to such areas and establishes new criteria for targeting state funding for such projects, but exempts libraries and property used for governmental purposes from the restrictions.

Effective: July 1, 2005

sHB 6570 (Passed both, House A & F) - AAC PLANS OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

GOVERNOR'S COMPETITIVENESS COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing Connecticut businesses' competitiveness continued to be a priority for the General Assembly. HB 6727 promotes job growth, creates economic opportunities in inner cities, and fosters better recruitment and retention of businesses to the state. The bill reduces the threshold for direct investments through the Urban and Industrial Site Reinvestment Program from \$20 million to \$5 million to facilitate investment in smaller projects and to transfer tax credits to more than one taxpayer. Projects are also eligible under the Urban and Industrial Site Reinvestment Program if their total direct investment is \$2 million and involves the restoration and re-development of historic facilities for mixed uses that includes a minimum of four housing units.

In addition, HB 6727 establishes two new DECD programs that enhance Connecticut's entrepreneurial potential and productivity. One program targets students and residents in the inner cities on how market-based strategies will help entrepreneurial efforts turn a profit and generate new development. For small and medium manufacturers struggling in a highly competitive global economy, the second program will help identify new foreign markets for their products, help provide access to progressive manufacturing and advanced technologies, and create a virtual center for more efficient design and development of products.

HB 6727 (Passed both, House A) - AAC THE GOVERNOR'S COMPETITIVENESS COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

STUDY TO ESTABLISH THE NEED FOR SKILLED WELDERS

A bright spot in Connecticut's job market, the demand for skilled welders is increasing and the number of skilled welders Connecticut graduates is far below the demand. Skilled welders are in demand for well-paying jobs in manufacturing, heavy construction, repair and maintenance of equipment.

While Massachusetts has 23 welding programs and California supports 72, only two of Connecticut's Regional Vocational Technical High Schools have welding programs, and no program offers adult courses in welding. SB 399 authorizes the Office of Workforce Competitiveness to analyze and study the two existing welding programs, the costs and benefits of expanding these training programs, and how to increase pre-apprentice and apprentice students. The OWC must report by February 1, 2006.

SB 399 (Passed Senate, Senate A) - AAC A STUDY TO ESTABLISH THE NEED FOR SKILLED WELDERS

INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE

Across the state, working men and women are logging in longer hours and still finding it difficult to earn a living and support a family in a region of the country with a relatively high cost of living. Seeking to address these concerns, state lawmakers passed legislation to increase the state's minimum hourly wage to \$7.40 effective January 1, 2006 and again to \$7.65 effective January 1, 2007. These gradual increases in the minimum wage reflect the real cost of living for working families across our state.

PA 05-32 (HB 6228) - AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE

REDUCTIONS IN STATE SERVICES

This legislation has a two-pronged approach to address proposed major layoffs or dismissals of state employees. In such instances the Office of Policy and Management would submit a written impact statement assessing the effect of the layoff on the affected agency or government body and on the clients it serves. Through its passage, the legislation will provide greater efficiency in state agencies, fairness to their employees, and preservation of services to the people of the state. It will also guard against reckless layoffs of employees without due consideration to the employees, citizens, and productivity of the agency.

PA 05-126 (SB 846) - AAC IMPACT STATEMENTS FOR REDUCTIONS IN STATE SERVICES AND ADVANCE LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL FOR SIGNIFICANT PROGRAMMATIC IMPACTS

PREVAILING WAGE PROJECTS

This legislation closes an unfair loophole in state prevailing wage law previously employed by contractors who subcontract work on state projects to independent contractors in order to avoid pay requirements under prevailing wage law. This legislation is written to narrowly apply only to people doing the work of laborers, mechanics, or workmen. Not only does this legislation promote fair pay for those doing work on prevailing wage projects but also it creates an even playing field for contractors wanting to provide equitable payment on state projects.

PA 05-50 (SB 847) - AAC REPORTING REQUIREMENTS ON PREVAILING WAGE PROJECTS

PROMOTION OF COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH APPLICATIONS WITH INDUSTRY

In a fast-evolving technology marketplace, the General Assembly makes a strong statement that Connecticut will be a source for research and development excellence in emerging technologies. SB 1258 will foster greater cooperation and collaboration between industry, universities and colleges specifically in the emerging technology, stem cell research and nanotechnology sectors. With the goals of talent generation, improved product development and new jobs, the bill establishes four new grant programs by the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, within available appropriations.

The OWC programs will help prepare college students for careers in research and development, spur research collaboration between industry and universities, promote technology transfer and advance nanotechnology in Connecticut. Grants will be available to students, faculty, institutions of higher education, and businesses for student outreach, the upgrade of instructional labs, recruitment of top professors in basic and applied research, commercialization of university research, and career development in industry shortage areas.

SB 1258 (Passed Both, Senate A) - AAC THE PROMOTION OF COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH APPLICATIONS WITH INDUSTRY

REGULATION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

The General Assembly passed legislation that enhances competition in Connecticut's telecommunications marketplace while protecting customers. The implementation of sSB 1097 must be included in the annual report given to the legislature by the DPUC.

Effective: July 1, 2005

SB 1097 (Passed both, Senate A) - AAC REGULATION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

THE STATE PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The General Assembly adopted the 2004-2009 Plan of Conservation and Development. The plan targets areas for priority funding, areas where it is prudent and feasible to have mixed-use development patterns and land reuse that is compact, accessible to transit, and pedestrian-oriented and promote such patterns and reuse, and corridor management areas on either side of a limited-access highway or a rail line.

Effective upon passage

HJ 146 (Passed both, House A) - RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE STATE PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES PLAN, 2004-2009.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

To address the energy problem in Connecticut, particularly in Southwestern Connecticut, the General Assembly passed sHB 6906. This bill creates incentives that promote the use of distributive generation throughout the state and provides additional funding for conservation and renewable investments. To ensure that the programs are addressing the state's energy problem, a joint committee of the Energy Conservation Management Board and the Renewable Energy Investments Advisory Committee shall establish a comprehensive energy plan and conduct an evaluation every five years.

The DPUC shall identify measures it deems appropriate to be implemented by the electric distribution companies, to assist in the reduction of the federally mandated congestion charges.

Effective: Most sections are effective upon passage with the following exceptions

Sec. 7, 22, 23, 25 – July 1, 1005

Sec. 26 – October 1, 2005

Section 28 – July 1, 2006

sHB 6906 (Passed House, House A & B) - AAC ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

SCHOOL NUTRITION

A landmark piece of legislation, SB 1309 is the strongest school nutrition bill passed in the nation that helps put our school children on the path to healthier lives. The bill reduces junk food and sugary drinks available in the school cafeteria and encourages increased physical activity before childhood obesity and overweight become an epidemic. Teaching our children to make healthy choices requires offering them healthy options in the school lunch line.

SB 1309 requires healthier drinks and snacks in schools and less junk food and soda. It provides for a daily minimum period of physical activity of twenty minutes for K-5 students in addition to physical education requirements. Also, the bill encourages the establishment of a School Wellness Committee in each school district as required under the Child Nutrition and Women, Infants and Children Reauthorization Act of 2004. These committees will monitor and implement physical activity and nutrition policies, while the State Department of Education will develop and distribute to school districts a list of healthy snacks. School districts that participate in the federal school breakfast or lunch program are required to enact a wellness policy by the start of the 2006-07 school year.

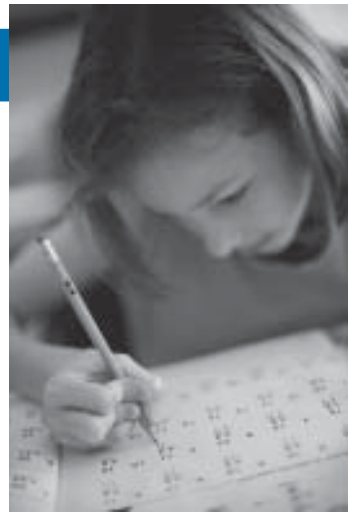
Good nutrition is key not only to having a long, healthy life but also will help students in the classroom. Obesity related health problems cost the state of Connecticut \$865 million a year.

PA 05-117 (SB 1309) - AAC SCHOOL NUTRITION

FOOD ALLERGIES AND THE PREVENTION OF LIFE-THREATENING INCIDENTS IN SCHOOLS

For many parents and children, preventing a life threatening food allergy attack is always first and foremost. To guarantee that our schools are safe for all students, the General Assembly passed SB 1312. It requires that the Department of Education, with the Department of Public Health, develop guidelines on how to handle students with life-threatening food allergies for boards of education. These policies must include training for school personnel on administering an epipen, procedures to develop individualized allergy action plans and prevent students' exposure to food allergies. Local boards of education must implement a plan of action for enrolled students with life-threatening allergies by July 1, 2006.

PA 05-104 (SB 1312) - AAC FOOD ALLERGIES AND THE PREVENTION OF LIFE-THREATENING INCIDENTS IN SCHOOLS



ENDOWMENT MATCHING FUNDS, THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT, CHEFA FUNDS FOR THE UCONN HEALTH CENTER AND FACULTY INCREASES

Facing burgeoning student populations, the need for full time faculty at Connecticut's institutions of higher education seemed to grow exponentially over the last few years. SB 1050 requires our public universities' and colleges' boards of trustees to plan, every two years, for future growth in student population and faculty needs and develop plans to increase full time faculty. The boards of UCONN, Connecticut State University and Community Technical Colleges must report biennially, beginning December 31, 2005, to the Higher Education Committee on the plans for more full time faculty.

Also, SB 1050 enables the University of Connecticut to borrow money from the Connecticut Health and Education Facilities Authority (CHEFA) to finance UCONN Health Center clinical service projects.

SB 1050 (Passed Both, Senate A) - AAC ENDOWMENT MATCHING FUNDS, THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT, CHEFA FUNDS FOR THE UCONN HEALTH CENTER AND FACULTY INCREASES

EXPENDITURES FOR THE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Incorporating several pieces of education legislation as well as implementing budget measures, HB 6989 demonstrates House Democrats' continued commitment to quality education for all students. In particular, HB 6989:

- Fosters communication of best practices from our charter schools, and requires the Department of Education to compile and distribute this information;
- Establishes a state education resource center with the school reform resource center to encourage innovative education practices;
- Increases the School Readiness reimbursement rate in both FY06 and FY07;
- Establishes the Early Childhood Education Cabinet to coordinate resources across agencies and promote quality among early childhood development and education programs;
- Increases the per-pupil grants to charter schools;
- Creates an Interdistrict magnet School Task Force to study magnet school funding and operations;
- Provides for development of a kindergarten assessment tool;
- Increases the Capitol Scholarship Grant;
- Requires an audit of private occupational school protection accounts;
- Establishes a task force on the professionalization of the early childhood education and child care workforce;
- Creates an adult education initiative competitive grant program;
- Provides assistance to Regional School District #11; and
- Establishes a technology pilot program for 9th & 10th graders.

HB 6989 (Passed both, House A) - AAC EXPENDITURES FOR THE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ENVIRONMENT

MOTORBOAT NOISE AND SOUND LEVEL TESTS

Connecticut has some of the most pristine coastal and riverside land in the country for families seeking recreational and residential opportunities. An increase in the use of loud motorboats, whose exhaust systems produce sound levels that can drown out conversation and even rattle the windows of homes, raises concerns for communities in proximity. This legislation cracks down on violators of the state motorboat noise laws by closing a loophole that permitted violators to refuse a sound-level test and pay a nominal fine by raising the fine for refusing the test. This legislation makes great strides in protecting the quality of life of our riverfront and shorelines areas.



HB 5615 (Passed both) - AAC CONCERNING MOTORBOAT NOISE AND MOTORBOAT SOUND LEVEL TESTS

CONNECTICUT CLEAN CAR INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Contained in the Connecticut Climate Change Plan of 2005, which the General Assembly approved last session, this legislation calls for the creation of a plan to encourage Connecticut families to invest in vehicles that produce lower greenhouse gas emissions. Under the legislation, government leaders are called upon to convene a working group that will submit a plan no later than January 2006 to reduce sales taxes on clean cars, such as the hybrid models. The transportation sector is the largest source of greenhouse gas pollution in the state, contributing more than 40% of the state's total greenhouse gases. This legislation provides significant health and economic benefits to Connecticut families, providing them with a breath of fresh air.

SA 05-6 (HB 6908) - AAC A CONNECTICUT CLEAN CAR INCENTIVE PROGRAM

A BI-STATE LONG ISLAND SOUND COMMITTEE

Protecting the rich natural resources of Long Island Sound remains a major environmental and public health priority for the state of Connecticut. This is true now more than ever, with rising concern over the impact of proposed industrialization and private use of the Sound. Composed of 18 members, half from Connecticut and half from New York, this bi-state committee will be charged with avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating the impact on the natural resources and water quality of the Sound.

PA 05-137 (SB 637) - AAC A BI-STATE LONG ISLAND SOUND COMMITTEE

A CONNECTICUT CLEAN DIESEL PLAN

This year, legislators tackled the serious health risks due to the release of diesel pollution in the air our families breathe. Particulate matter in diesel fuels release a toxic mixture of carcinogens and other air toxins that are linked to asthma, heart attack, respiratory disease and premature death. Of particular concern to legislators is the toll diesel emissions inflicts on the sensitive organs of Connecticut's children. Because of this legislation, a committee consisting of commissioners from state agencies will develop a plan for reducing diesel emissions from school buses, buses and trucks and measuring estimated costs for implementation. One need only look at the statistic that Fairfield, New Haven and Hartford counties are ranked in the top ten percent of all U.S. counties to understand the gravity of this environmental and public health matter.

SA 05-7 (SB 920) - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CONNECTICUT CLEAN DIESEL PLAN

BUFFERS TO INLAND WETLANDS AREAS

The General Assembly passed legislation this session to protect farmland and preserve open space. SB 1085 makes changes to the "490" program in which eligible farm, forest, or open space land would be assessed on its current use, rather than its full market value. This bill specifies that land classified as open space, farm, or forestland under the "490" program is personal to its owner and does not run with the land. The bill also modifies when transactions involving the land or changes in its use make it subject to a conveyance tax. This legislation bases the conveyance tax on the property's fair market value as determined in conjunction with the most recent revaluation.

Effective: July 1, 2005

SB 1085 also provides that land required by a municipal inland wetland agency to act as a buffer to wetlands be assessed as though it were wetlands.

Effective upon passage

SB 1085 (Passed both, Senate A) - AAC BUFFERS TO INLAND WETLANDS AREAS

CLEAN AIR STRATEGIES

This legislation prohibits the installation or operation of outdoor wood-burning furnaces unless they meet a number of exemptions enumerated in the bill, such as those that burn wood that is not chemically treated. Environmental and immediate health concerns related to the release of smoke into the air prompted consideration of this legislation. It is further noted that outdoor furnaces do not include fire pits, wood-fired barbecues, or decorative fireplaces.

HB 6773 (Passed both) - AN ACT CONCERNING CLEAN AIR STRATEGIES

ETHICS & ACCOUNTABILITY

After a year that rocked Connecticut with scandal, one of House Democrats' top priorities was reform. Through a bi-partisan effort, several bills helped bring needed change in contracting and ethics laws, close loopholes, expand safeguards, increase campaign accountability and provide greater access to government to ensure that in the future Connecticut is protected against corruption.

CREATING THE OFFICE OF STATE ETHICS AND THE CITIZEN'S ETHICS ADVISORY BOARD

In order to more effectively address ethics concerns and promote ethical behavior, the General Assembly voted to start fresh and create the Office of State Ethics and the nine-member Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board as the successor to the State Ethics Commission. The new structure of the OSE divides the office into a legal and enforcement division with a separate executive director, ethics enforcement officer and general counsel as it both administers, educates on, and enforces the Code of Ethics for Public Officials and Code of Ethics for Lobbyists.

In this new organization, the enforcement division will investigate complaints filed and initiated by the Citizen's Advisory Board. All probable cause hearings and determinations will be brought before a judge trial referee. Now, two-thirds of board members present and voting are needed to find an ethics violation and impose penalties. Finally, the bill provides that all new staff fill the new organization's positions.

SB 1 (Passed both, Senate A, House A) - AA CREATING THE OFFICE OF STATE ETHICS AND THE CITIZEN'S ETHICS ADVISORY BOARD

REFORM OF THE STATE CONTRACTING PROCESS

The culmination of the Governor's Task Force on Contract Reform, the General Assembly passed SB 94 to make a number of necessary reforms to clean up the state's contracting processes and to establish additional safeguards and concerns. Included in the bill is the establishment of the State Contracting Standards Board, a new independent agency to address and review contracting practices, audit state contracting agencies and discipline them for failure of compliance as well as establishing a uniform procurement code.

In addition, the bill provides a stricter procedure for the General Assembly for fast track projects, places a limited ban on privatization contracts, establishes legal service contracts that result in more than \$250,000 in legal fees, addresses light pollution at state buildings and facilities, and finally, the bill prohibits the state from contracting with any corporation that has reincorporated outside of the US before July 1, 2005 and received a tax benefit as a result.

SB 94 (Passed Both, Senate A, B, C & D) - AAC REFORM OF THE STATE CONTRACTING PROCESS

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

SB 96, another piece of the reform package, makes numerous changes to state contracting laws, including subjecting state contractors to state ethics laws, and penalizes them for violations, modifies the contract award process, requires more contracts to be competitively bid, and requires contractors to identify consultants that helped on the project.

Also, the General Assembly voted to tighten Connecticut's ethics laws, increasing gift restrictions and reporting. Plus, SB 96 broadens the Attorney General's authority to bring civil actions against an ethics violator, expands the whistleblower statutes and lobbyist reporting requirements. Whistleblowers will now be protected from civil liability for good faith disclosures to the state's ethics enforcement agency regarding alleged ethics violations.

Finally, in the wake of another scandal regarding the former governor, SB 96 prohibits any public official or state employee convicted of a crime related to his/her employment from seeking out or taking a job as a lobbyist.

SB 96 (Senate passed, House Disagreeing Action) - AAC GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

ABSENTEE VOTING, ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT, A VOTING TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS BOARD, NOMINATION PROCEDURES, TRAINING FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS, CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTING, RESTORATION OF VOTING RIGHTS AND VOTER REGISTRATION

One of two bills on election reform, HB 6669 tightens the law in a number of areas to prevent fraud and provide transparency in the election process. First, the bill introduces a paper trail for absentee ballots to prevent fraud and protect voters. In addition, the General Assembly voted to allow voters to register up to seven days before election day, reducing the time from fourteen days, and makes the restoration of voting rights more efficient.

HB 6669 (Passed Both, House A) - AAC ABSENTEE VOTING, ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT, A VOTING TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS BOARD, NOMINATION PROCEDURES, TRAINING FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS, CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTING, RESTORATION OF VOTING RIGHTS AND VOTER REGISTRATION

VOTER REGISTRATION, CERTAIN NOMINATING PROCEDURES, CAMPAIGN ACCOUNTABILITY, A VOTER GUIDE, PUSH POLLING AND ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES

The second election reform bill passed by the legislature provides for voter verified paper ballots on all new electronic voting machines to protect voters from ballot fraud. Additionally, the bill provides for an on-line voter guide and creates a study on push polling. Finally, following the lead of the federal election reforms, SB 55 increases campaign accountability by requiring increased disclosure of payment of campaign ads and the candidate's endorsement that s/he "approves this ad."

SB 55 (Passed Both, Senate A) - AAC VOTER REGISTRATION, CERTAIN NOMINATING PROCEDURES, CAMPAIGN ACCOUNTABILITY, A VOTER GUIDE, PUSH POLLING AND ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES

COMPREHENSIVE CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM FOR STATE-WIDE CONSTITUTIONAL AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OFFICES

In response to popular pressure and fervent calls from the Governor for campaign finance reform, the House of Representatives passed a far-reaching compromise on how campaigns are financed. With the strictest provisions in the nation, HB 6670 will put in place numerous prohibitions against special interest dollars from PACs, lobbyists and state contractors, and close the ad book loophole before the 2006 election cycle. In addition, it will establish public financing through the Citizen's Election Program for state representative and state senator candidates in 2008 and for gubernatorial and statewide candidates in 2010. This sweeping campaign finance reform legislation will redefine campaigns, increase participation and competition to benefit the people of Connecticut with stronger, more pluralistic elected bodies.

HB 6670 (House Passed, House A & C) - AAC COMPREHENSIVE CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM FOR STATE-WIDE CONSTITUTIONAL AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OFFICES

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY OF STATE GOVERNMENT

In response to calls from the public to clean up government and make public officials more accountable, the General Assembly passed HB 6685 to require greater fiscal accountability from government. Under the new law, the Office of Fiscal Analysis and the Office of Policy and Management must present budget and financial information to the Appropriations and Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committees by November 15th. In a further effort to get fiscal numbers in order prior to a budget deadline, the bill now requires the Finance and Appropriations Committees to meet with the OPM Secretary and OFA director by November 30th. In addition, all bills that state agencies file with the House and Senate Clerks must now include fiscal notes. Finally, it requires the State Bond Commission to have their agenda available at least four days prior to their meeting.

HB 6685 (Passed both, House A) - AAC FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY OF STATE GOVERNMENT

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Connecticut has become just the third state to endorse and fund human adult and embryonic stem cell research. The landmark bill provides a 'safe haven' for stem cell researchers, establishes a regulatory framework for conducting the research and bans human cloning. Included in the legislation is a 10-year, \$100 million funding commitment designed to keep Connecticut's best and brightest scientific minds in state, and to attract new ones from around the nation and world. Proponents believe that embryonic stem cell research holds great promise for finding cures for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, juvenile diabetes and other diseases - as embryonic stem cells have the unique potential to repair all types of damaged tissue in the body.



PA 05-149 (SB 934) - AN ACT PERMITTING STEM CELL RESEARCH AND BANNING THE CLONING OF HUMAN BEINGS

QUALITY OF CARE IN CHRONIC DISEASE HOSPITALS

In an effort to pursue quality health care, PA 05-80 requires the medical director of a chronic disease hospital to review potential patients and their medical records to ensure that the facility is properly able to take care of the patient. The patient's care must be in line with the hospital's by-laws.

PA 05-80 (HB 5169) - AAC QUALITY OF CARE IN CHRONIC DISEASE HOSPITALS

GROUPS UNDER THE STATE EMPLOYEE HEALTH PLAN AND ASSOCIATION GROUP PLANS

With health insurance costs skyrocketing for small businesses and policies becoming increasingly restrictive, the General Assembly passed HB 6655 to provide greater flexibility in insurance policies, savings to small employers, and increased access to the MEHIP program. It allows the Comptroller and association group plans to pool rates rather than use community ratings, and revises the definition of "small employer" under the small employer health plan law. The bill also exempts small employer plans offered by the Comptroller and amends the community rating law to allow small employer plans to account for savings when establishing rates. In addition, the bill extends MEHIP benefits to individuals eligible for retirement benefits and to federally qualified nonprofits that receive public funds or contract with the state, and labor unions.

HB 6655 (Passed both, House A) - AAC GROUPS UNDER THE STATE EMPLOYEE HEALTH PLAN AND ASSOCIATION GROUP PLANS

ORGAN AND TISSUE DATABASE

Last year, Connecticut became the second state in New England to set up an organ database transfer system between the Department of Motor Vehicles and the two organ procurement organizations (LifeChoice and New England Organ Bank). The database would transfer the names of potential donors to the groups that actually match potential donors and recipients.

In addition, it made the donor a legal donor; prior to that the ability to donate could be overturned by a family member. PA 05-121 extends these provisions to residents who have DMV administered identification cards. This was a slight oversight from last year's bill, and increases the number of donors by nearly 10,000 people.

PA 05-121 (HB 6717) - AAC ORGAN AND TISSUE DONORS

PROTECTING CITIZENS WITH FOOD ALLERGIES

PA 05-122 requires food establishments to have on staff a qualified food operator knowledgeable in food allergies. This bill came about due to concerns of families with children allergic to certain foods. Before the order can be put in to the kitchen, the allergic patron needs to know exactly what is in a dish. If the server is incorrect, the patron can have a dangerous allergic reaction. Prior forms of this bill required a list of ingredients for all menu items, but that was decided to be too burdensome on the establishment. PA 05-122 ensures the safety of the patron without being overly burdensome on the establishment.

PA 05-122 (HB 6770) - AAC FOOD ALLERGIES

NOTIFICATION OF CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST PHYSICIANS

The effort to keep health insurance costs controlled contains many facets. Many of the malpractice suits in Connecticut are brought against a few physicians. In order to stop some of those practicing physicians from further harm against patients, the Chief State's Attorney is required to notify the Department of Public Health for any of the following charges:

- Reckless endangerment within the scope of the physician's medical practice,
- manslaughter, or
- murder

DPH can then take the necessary professional action against the physician while criminal charges are pending.

PA 05-67 (SB 111) - AA REQUIRING NOTIFICATION OF CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST CT PHYSICIANS

ELECTRONIC PRESCRIPTIONS AND ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS

In an effort to reduce medical errors, this bill requires health care institutions to have an electronic prescription system in place by Oct. 1, 2007 and authorizes institutions to use electronic medical records. Human error in reading or writing a verbal prescription has been one of the causes for medical error and this bill will go towards reducing that margin of error. The electronic medical record sections of the bill will allow facilities to better integrate and facilitate better care.

HB 6557 (Passed both, House A & B) - AAC ELECTRONIC PRESCRIPTIONS AND ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS

DISPOSITION OF UNCLAIMED CREMATED REMAINS BY FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Prior to passage of PA 05-81, funeral directors had no regulations as to how, if at all, the home could dispose of unclaimed cremated remains. This was brought to light at the closing of a funeral home in Danbury that had 87 unclaimed remains.

A person must enter a signed agreement with a funeral home, consenting cremation and to take responsibility for the remains after the cremation. If the remains are unclaimed after 180 days, the funeral home director or embalmer must send notice of disposal by one of the following methods to the person who has taken the responsibility for claiming them:

- (1) burial in a cemetery or memorial garden;
- (2) storage in a crypt of a mausoleum or columbarium;
- (3) scattering;
- (4) funeral home storage; or
- (5) another method identified in the signed form, if the funeral director has met the bill's notice provisions.

The person responsible for claiming them has 90 days to respond to the notice. If the responsible party hasn't claimed the remains within those 90 days, the funeral director can dispose of them in one the aforementioned ways. The director must give written notice to the registrar of vital records of the town issuing the cremation permit as to the disposal method.

PA 05-81 (HB 5799) - AAC DISPOSITION OF UNCLAIMED CREMATED REMAINS BY FUNERAL DIRECTORS

NURSING FACILITY USER FEE

In an effort to stabilize the nursing home funding shortage, the industry pushed the state to pursue available federal matching funds for nursing homes. SB 707 implements a 6% fee on non-Medicare patient days (a day in which the patient is not paying by Medicare), exempting continuing care retirement communities. This translates into a \$14 per day fee per bed. Annualized, this generates \$126.4 million in state funds, which would be matched by the federal government, for a total of \$245 million annually. The budget allocates \$53 million to the nursing homes for FY 05.

STATE BUDGET DOCUMENT

THE AUTHORITY OF THE COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SERVICES WITH RESPECT TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE MEDICAID PROGRAM

In an effort to provide better care and maximize federal Medicaid reimbursement dollars, the General Assembly voted to extend the prohibition on the DSS Commissioner from agreeing to a federal Medicaid waiver that would reduce the standard 50% federal reimbursement rate for an additional two years.

Vetoed - PA 05-40 (SB 1100) - AAC THE AUTHORITY OF THE COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SERVICES WITH RESPECT TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE MEDICAID PROGRAM

RESTRICTING THE SALE OF COSMETIC CONTACT LENSES

As the sales of cosmetic contact lenses that are not used to improve vision has increased, eye physicians have become increasingly concerned with the long term care of the patient. Contacts need to be fitted to each individual and properly cared for. Consumers who purchase cosmetic contacts through non-optical establishment retailers do not receive a proper fitting, if any, and would not be trained to appropriately take care of the contacts. The long-term effects can lead to impaired vision and damage to the eye. By restricting the sale to only those retailers properly trained in fitting and training patients, the future safety of the patient can be ensured.

PA 05-119 (HB 6302) - AA RESTRICTING THE SALE OF COSMETIC CONTACT LENSES

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR BREAST CANCER SCREENING

Annual breast cancer statistics in the state of Connecticut offer sobering testimony on the toll the disease has on women and families in our state. This legislation marks another step forward the General Assembly has made in improving health care quality and access in Connecticut, particularly affecting women. State lawmakers approved legislation to require that insurers cover ultrasound screenings for breast cancer if recommended by a doctor. Women will receive access to a screening process that offers reliable, early detection. This legislation makes progress in the effort to promote early detection, precluding the spread of cancer to other parts of the body. It helps prevent misdiagnosis by requiring coverage of a form of screening that is both comprehensive and highly accurate in detection.

PA 05-69 (SB 30) - AAC HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR BREAST CANCER SCREENING

INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR INFERTILITY TREATMENT AND PROCEDURES

During discussion of this legislation, members of the public and lawmakers provided compelling, personal testimony about their experiences with infertility. Thanks to legislation approved by the General Assembly this session, women will be ensured coverage of medically necessary infertility diagnosis and treatment. With certain exemptions for the state's health insurance companies, including limits on age and cycles of treatment, as well as religious organizations, proven and effective medical treatment from the state's doctors will be covered for couples seeking coverage for this life-changing treatment.

SB 508 (Passed both, Senate A) - AAC HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR INFERTILITY TREATMENT AND PROCEDURES

PATIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND DISCOUNT CARDS FOR PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES

With a unanimous vote, the House passed HB 6854, establishing the Pharmacy Outreach Program to provide greater access to and education about reduced and free prescription drug programs available to Connecticut residents. Administered by the pharmaceutical manufacturers, the program creates a statewide 800 number and website to readily provide information on voluntary drug assistance programs and advise residents on their eligibility for various programs. Instead of visiting several websites or calling drug companies to sign up for their reduced or no cost drug programs, the Pharmacy Outreach Program will provide one-stop shopping for all available voluntary drug assistance programs, eliminating obstacles and cumbersome processes for our neediest residents.

HB 6854 (Passed both, House A) - AAC INFORMATION RELATING TO PATIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND DISCOUNT CARDS FOR PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES

PRESCRIPTIVE AUTHORITY OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

HB 5814 allows a physician assistant (PA) to prescribe schedule II through V drugs in all settings; however, if a schedule II or III drug is prescribed, the bill requires the supervising physician to approve the order within one business day. Currently, a physician assistant can prescribe and renew drugs in only certain settings with supervisory approval.

The bill also changes the definition of a supervising physician. Currently, a supervising physician is a physician who practices in the same location as the PA. This bill changes that requirement and requires the supervising physician to be in continuous availability or direct contact with the PA.

HB 5814 (Passed both, Senate A) - AA EXPANDING THE PRESCRIPTIVE AUTHORITY OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

STRIKE CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR HEALTH CARE INSTITUTIONS

Current law requires a health care institution to file a contingency plan with the Department of Public Health once a labor organization notices the institution of a strike. This bill changes that to require the contingency plan be filed no later than five (5) days prior to the scheduled strike.

The plan must contain provisions certifying that the institution has arranged for adequate staffing and security, food, pharmaceuticals, and other essential supplies to meet the patients needs if there is a strike.

If an institution fails to file a contingency plan prior to the five-day time period, the commissioner of Public Health can file a summary order for the plan. The penalty for failing to have filed a contingency plan is up to \$10,000 for each day of non-compliance.

HB 6715 (Passed both, House A) - AAC STRIKE CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR HEALTH CARE INSTITUTIONS

ACCESS TO ORAL HEALTH CARE

HB 6819 redefines the scope of practice for dentists, dental hygienists, and dental assistants, including allowing a dentist to practice oral and maxillofacial surgery. There is also a provision that allows for a candidate for their dental license to substitute a year of post-graduate training for the practical portion of the licensing exam. This bill also creates a continuing education requirement of 25 contact hours in the past 24 months for dentists.

The dentists' scope of practice is defined as diagnosis, evaluation, prevention or treatment, by surgery or other means, of an injury, deformity, disease, or condition of the oral cavity. This is a change from the current scope which allows a dentist to examine, diagnose, treat disease or lesions of, and perform operations in the mouth and surrounding and associated structures.

HB 6819 (Passed both) - AAC ACCESS TO ORAL HEALTH CARE

ESTABLISHING A COLLABORATIVE DRUG THERAPY MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT PILOT PROGRAM

Current law allows physicians and pharmacists, those that work in hospitals and nursing homes, to enter into collaborative practice agreements to manage a patient's drug therapy. HB 6970 expands these two settings to include collaborative agreements for those patients in out-patient facilities who are being treated for: diabetes, asthma, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, osteoporosis, congestive heart failure, or smoking cessation.

The bill also sets up a pilot program, administered by the commissioner of Consumer Protection, to establish a two-year pilot program allowing collaborative drug therapy agreements between physicians and pharmacists employed in community pharmacies.

HB 6970 (Passed both, House A) - AA ESTABLISHING A COLLABORATIVE DRUG THERAPY MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT PILOT PROGRAM

HOSPITAL PATIENTS' RIGHTS

PA 05-128 requires a hospital to notify a patient of his or her rights under the hospital's participation condition of Medicare. Notification must be made upon admission of the patient to the patient, his or her guardian, or other legal representative. The notice must be written, with the rights listed, and provide information as to how the patient can complain, including contacting the Department of Public Health.

The rights of a patient include:

1. Notification of the following rights: file a grievance; participate in the development of his plan of care; make decisions concerning his care; be informed of his health status; formulate advance directives; maintain personal privacy; receive care in a safe setting; have medical records kept confidential; and be free from restraints and seclusion in any form as a means of coercion, discipline, convenience, or retaliation.
2. Exercise rights in regard to his care.
3. Privacy and safety.
4. Confidentiality.
5. Freedom from use of restraints for hospital care unless clinically necessary.
6. Freedom from seclusion and restraints used in behavior management unless clinically necessary.

PA 05-128 (SB 1095) - AAC HOSPITAL PATIENTS' RIGHTS

THE STATE'S LONG TERM PLAN

Unfortunately even in this day and age, people are afflicted with diseases and other debilitating health problems. There is a clear need for effective long term care planning and proper oversight. PA 05-14 ensures that those in need of long term care are placed in the proper environment for their care and are not simply placed in environments such as institutions when a better location is available.

PA 05-14 (HB 6786) - AAC THE STATE'S LONG TERM PLAN

TRAINING AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESIDENT SERVICE COORDINATORS

This legislation expands and redefines the responsibilities of resident service coordinators (RSCs), who assist residents of state-assisted mixed population housing for seniors and individuals with disabilities. As provided under the bill, primary responsibilities for RSCs include conflict resolution among residents, acting as liaisons for problem solving, and organizing meetings and activities to promote socialization among residents. As the General Assembly seeks to address concerns involving state-assisted mixed population housing, this legislation will help define the important role RSCs provide in helping to achieve conflict resolution among residents.

HB 6594 (Passed both, House A) - AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRAINING AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESIDENT SERVICE COORDINATORS

THE IDENTIFICATION OF A LANDLORD

This legislation addresses a serious concern for tenants across the state – the problem of absentee landlords who are difficult for housing courts to locate when being cited for poor management, upkeep, health hazards and other housing code violations. This legislation would permit municipalities to require nonresident owners of rental property, or their agents, to maintain a current residential address on file in the municipality where the property is located. Further, the owner or agent must inform the municipality of a residential address change.

HB 6539 (Passed both, House A) - AN ACT CONCERNING THE IDENTIFICATION OF A LANDLORD

LOW INCOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The General Assembly expanded the existing statute to include a basic grant for eligible households that does not discriminate based on the types of energy they use for heating.

Effective: October 1, 2005

PA 05-123 (HB 6780) - AAC LOW INCOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS REQUIRED IN NEW HOMES

In an effort to curb the growing trend of harmful - and in some cases deadly - exposure to carbon monoxide, the General Assembly passed legislation that requires carbon monoxide detector and warning equipment to be installed in all newly constructed one- and two- family homes. Nationwide, more than 15,000 people are treated in emergency rooms for exposure to carbon monoxide – a colorless, odorless and tasteless gas, the symptoms of which are often overlooked. The new requirement is modeled after fire alarm installation laws, first enacted in the 1970's, which have dramatically reduced deaths and injuries caused by fire.

HB 6894 (Passed both) - AAC INSTALLATION OF CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS IN NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

FARM LAND PRESERVATION, LAND PROTECTION, AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The General Assembly passed legislation that provides funding for farmland preservation programs and existing programs, including affordable housing, open space acquisition, and historic preservation. The funding is generated by a \$30 fee collected by towns for each document they record in their land records, of which the municipality keeps \$3 to fund capital improvement projects.

Effective: July 1, 2005

sSB410 extends the current property tax exemption to up to \$100,000 of the assessed value for agricultural buildings housing seasonal agricultural employees.

Effective upon passage to assessment years beginning on or after October 1, 2005

sSB 410 (Passed both, Senate A & B) - AAC FARM LAND PRESERVATION, LAND PROTECTION, AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

REAL ESTATE CONVEYANCE TAX

Providing property tax relief and much needed revenue to our municipalities, the General Assembly voted to extend the .25% municipal real estate conveyance tax rate until July 1, 2007. Over the next two fiscal years, this extension is estimated to generate between \$30 and \$50 million in revenue to all municipalities, and therefore provide property tax relief. According to real estate sales data, in FY04 this initiative generated approximately \$39 million for our communities.

HB 6841 (Passed both) - AAC THE REAL ESTATE CONVEYANCE TAX

JUDICIARY

CIVIL UNIONS

A total of 588 rights, benefits and responsibilities are extended to opposite-sex couples through the institution of marriage. Included among these are: access to one another's health insurance coverage, hospital visitation rights, family medical leave benefits when caring for an ill partner, and inheritance rights. Connecticut state lawmakers came together in a respectful, bipartisan fashion to address inequities in state law by engaging in thoughtful debate. This legislation creates a separate institution of "civil unions," which same-sex couples will be able to enter into by filing forms with town clerks across the state. These couples will then be entitled to the state rights, benefits, and responsibilities of marriage.

PA 05-10 (SB 963) - AAC CIVIL UNIONS



RESTRICTIONS ON POCKET BIKES

Pocket bikes, which have been growing in popularity, fall within a gray and uncertain area of the law. Even though they are often only 16 inches tall, they are able to reach speeds of up to 40 miles an hour. The high speed and small structure of pocket bikes create a dangerous situation on our sidewalks and streets. State lawmakers took action to restrict the use of mini-motorcycles on public roads, sidewalks, and other public property. In addition, the bill provides that anyone offering a mini-motorcycle for sale, lease, or rent must provide warning labels and advisories on the safe and legal use of such vehicles, the limitations on their use, and the possible consequences for violating the limitations.

HB 6744 (Passed both, House A) - AAC RESTRICTIONS ON THE OPERATION OF MINI-MOTORCYCLES

ENCOURAGING FAIR AND EQUITABLE CRIMINAL JUSTICE

This bill eliminates the disparity in the minimum amount of crack and powder cocaine that a non-drug dependant person must possess to be found guilty of selling or manufacturing cocaine with the intent to sell. It accomplishes this by increasing the minimum amount of crack cocaine from one-half gram to one-half ounce and by decreasing the minimum amount for powder cocaine from one ounce to one-half ounce. Lawmakers pushed for this legislation in an effort to undo what is believed to be racial disparity in the criminal justice system that unfairly harms minorities.

This legislation also contains sections prohibiting a person, firm or corporation from entering a funeral service contract on behalf of a funeral service establishment unless licensed as an embalmer or funeral director. This portion of the bill addresses cases in which families purchased contracts for funerals, only to find out later that the money they paid was gone and the contract was not honored.

HB 6975 (Passed both, House A) - AAC FORFEITED BAIL BONDS, THE COLLECTION OF UNPAID FEES, AND FUNERAL SERVICE CONTRACTS (Vehicle for the Crack/Cocaine Bill)

SANCTIONS FOR PERJURY, FALSE STATEMENTS BY POLICE OFFICERS

Under new legislation, a police officer who tampers with or fabricates evidence, commits perjury or makes false statements in the line of duty will have his/her certification revoked, effectively barring that individual from work in law enforcement. Intended to bolster public confidence, the bill creates a high standard of conduct for all police officers and sanctions those who choose to cut corners to win a conviction. The law takes effect October 1.

HB 6746 (Passed both, Senate A) - AAC EVIDENCE TAMPERING, PERJURY AND FALSE STATEMENTS BY POLICE OFFICERS

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE INSURANCE REFORM

This year, Speaker of the House Jim Amann worked closely with the House and Senate chairs of committees with oversight as well as lawmakers with expertise in the three main policy areas affected by medical malpractice insurance reform: judicial and civil, insurance, and public health and patient safety. The product of their work is contained in a comprehensive, bipartisan bill that incorporates an array of solutions to expand access to health care and curtail the rising cost of medical malpractice insurance premiums in Connecticut. Among the provisions in place under this legislation are revisions to the Offer of Compromise stage, in which plaintiffs and defendants review the Good Faith Certificate, a document that must be signed by a physician practicing in the same area of medicine, certifying that grounds exist for negligence of care. It is also during this stage that both sides shall attempt to settle for a sum certain. In order to implement safeguards against out-of-control premium increases, medical malpractice insurers seeking to raise premiums by 7.5% or higher would be required to inform their insureds, who are entitled to hold a public hearing prior to approval of the increase from the Department of Insurance. In order to strengthen patient safety practices, each hospital and outpatient surgical facility is required to develop accurate identification procedures to be used prior to surgery. Lastly, the legislation introduces continuing education for doctors, who must show a minimum of 50 contact hours of medical education within the preceding 24-month period. The legislation provides that if, by 2008, reforms included under this package fall short of aims to reduce the frequency and amount of awards and settlements, the Insurance Commissioner shall convene a working group to pursue alternatives to reducing medical malpractice insurance premiums.

SB 1052 (Passed both, Senate A & B)- AAC MEDICAL MALPRACTICE INSURANCE REFORM

CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLANNING

The focus on this legislation is the reduction of crime and reduction of cost to the criminal justice system. It will help make Connecticut smarter in the execution of criminal justice through intelligent planning and measurements of results to determine what works best in terms of coordination of the planning and public policy decisions of various agencies addressing criminal justice, such as the Department of Corrections and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. This legislation creates within the Office of Policy and Management an office for the Undersecretary for Criminal Justice Planning, whose primary responsibility is the effective coordination of criminal justice proceedings in the state. With the establishment of this office, agencies addressing the state's criminal justice proceedings will experience more efficient and cost-effective coordination of planning.

HB 6976 (Passed both, House A & B) - AN ACT CONCERNING CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLANNING

INCREASING THE FINES FOR TRESPASS, LITTERING AND VANDALISM ON PUBLIC LANDS

The focus behind this legislation is to preserve the pristine beauty of Connecticut's many public land locations through a number of provisions geared toward improving enforcement, strengthening fines, and deterring vandalism. The strengthened fines and surcharges, half of which is provided to the municipality in which the arrest occurred, are meant in part to provide incentives for Connecticut's municipalities to more strictly enforce vandalism and littering laws. Because much of the littering, vandalism, and damage of land occurs during illegal trespass, the legislation broadens the list of activities that constitute trespassing. The positive environmental impact is teamed with a cost saving portion that could potentially save the state significant sums of money previously used to repair damage on public land caused by trespass, littering, and vandalism.

HB 5750 (Passed both, House A) - AN ACT INCREASING THE FINES FOR TRESPASS, LITTERING AND VANDALISM ON PUBLIC LANDS

NEW CELL PHONE RESTRICTIONS WHILE DRIVING

The General Assembly finally passed legislation that restricts cell phone use and bans the use of some other electronic devices while operating a motor vehicle. Beginning October 1, drivers must use hands-free technology, with certain conditions and exceptions. Drivers are permitted to turn a cell phone on and off, dial and answer cell phones manually. While responding to an emergency situation, a driver may use either a hand-held or hands-free cell phone. Other electronic devices that drivers may no longer use include text messaging devices, pagers, personal digital assistants, video game devices, digital video disk players, laptop computers, and digital cameras. Emergency personnel, while performing their official duties, are exempt from the hands-free requirement. The new law also: completely bans 16- and 17-year old drivers from using a hand-held or hands-free cell phone while driving; prohibits school bus drivers from using any electronic device, including hands-free cell phones, while operating buses with passengers on board; and adds any type of distracted driving (drinking coffee, putting on make-up, etc.) as a 'secondary' offense. A secondary violation means that drivers can only be cited for that offense if pulled over for another reason.



HB 6722 (Passed both, House A & B) - AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF HAND-HELD MOBILE TELEPHONES BY OPERATORS OF MOTOR VEHICLES

HB 6959 (Passed both, Senate A) - AN ACT CONCERNING ACCIDENTS INVOLVING STATE VEHICLES.

NEW RESTRICTIONS ON TEEN DRIVERS

In an effort to tighten graduated licensing laws and reduce motor vehicle crashes involving younger drivers, the legislature has enacted new restrictions on 16- and 17-year old drivers. Beginning October 1, 16- and 17-year olds will be banned from driving between the hours of 12:01 AM and 5:00 AM. Exceptions to the ban include driving related to school, work, religious activity, or in the case of an emergency. The new law also increases by 12 hours, from 8 to 20, the number of behind-the-wheel, on-the-road experience required to obtain a learner's permit.

PA 05-54 (HB 5446) - AAC ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND RESTRICTIONS FOR DRIVERS UNDER THE AGE OF 18

CHILD SAFETY IN MOTOR VEHICLES

Connecticut has joined a growing list of states that require children ages 4-7 to be in booster seats when they are passengers in motor vehicles. Legislation passed this session requires that children up to their 7th birthday, or until they reach 60 pounds (whichever happens first), ride in a booster seat. Children in the 4-7 age category are often too big for car seats and too small for traditional seat belts, which are manufactured for adults. Nationally, the #1 cause of death for children ages 4-7 is motor vehicle crashes. The new law - due to take effect on October 1 - also requires that children up to age 1, or until they reach 20 pounds, ride in a rear-facing car seat.

PA 05-58 (HB 6660) - AAC CHILD RESTRAINT SYSTEMS

ACCURATE POSTING OF GAS PRICES

Legislation passed this year by the General Assembly requires customer clubs or organizations that sell gasoline to the general public to post prices in the same manner for members and non-members. In an effort to draw customers, some club retailers prominently display discounted prices available only to members. Given the recent spike in gas prices, the bill seeks to ensure that consumers have accurate information needed to make informed choices. The new law is effective immediately.

PA 05-89 (SB 412) - AAC THE POSTING OF GAS PRICES

VETERANS

MOBILIZATION AWARDS FOR MEMBERS OF THE CONNECTICUT NATIONAL GUARD

PA 05-21 allows for the Connecticut National Guard to award medals, bronze stars (instead of succeeding awards), and silver stars (for five bronze stars) to members of an organized militia who have served for 30 days in the wartime efforts post-September 11, 2001.



PA 05-21 (HB 6629) - AAC MOBILIZATION AWARDS FOR MEMBERS OF THE CONNECTICUT NATIONAL GUARD

TUITION BREAKS FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL STATIONED IN CONNECTICUT

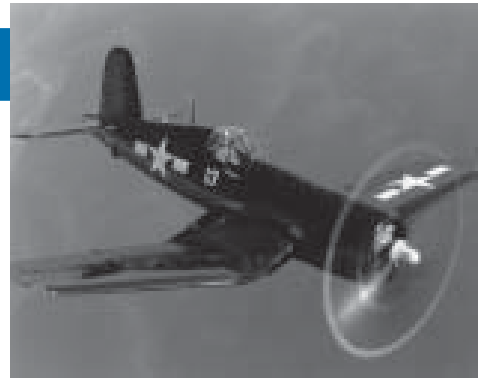
Designed to boost access to higher education opportunities for enlisted soldiers, the General Assembly passed legislation that streamlines the process by which active military duty personnel stationed in Connecticut may qualify for in-state tuition. The new law, effective July 1, allows immediate access to this valuable benefit at the University of Connecticut, the Connecticut State University system or Connecticut's community-technical college system. In the past, military personnel stationed here were required to establish Connecticut residency - a process that takes up to a year.

PA 05-110 (SB 398) - AAC IN-STATE TUITION FOR ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY STATIONED IN CONNECTICUT

MISCELLANEOUS

F4U CORSAIR DAY

PA 05-49 designates May 29 as F4U Corsair Day in Connecticut. The F4U Corsair was the only major aircraft used in WWII that was produced in a single state. The F4U Corsair Day is also to recognize the Connecticut employees of Pratt and Whitney, Hamilton Standard and Vought-Sikorsky that produced this plane.



PA 05-49 (SB 585) - AA DESIGNATING THE F4U CORSAIR AS THE STATE AIRCRAFT

COMMISSION ON AGING

PA 05-77 expands the Commission on Aging from eleven to seventeen voting members. Currently, the governor selects the chair of the committee. This bill will allow the members of the committee to choose the chairperson. Finally, the bill removes the Commission from under the Department of Social Services to the legislative branch for administrative purposes.

PA 05-77 (SB 967) - AAC THE COMMISSION ON AGING

LIQUOR CONTROL ACT

To protect Connecticut's consumers, HB 6608 makes several changes to the Liquor Control Act. It requires manufacturers and wholesalers to post their lowest sale price to retailers by the 12th of the previous month, with regard to the delivery of shipment. The bill also makes it illegal for retailers to sell any alcoholic beverage below the lowest price that the manufacturer posts.

HB 6608 (Passed both, House A) - AAC LIQUOR CONTROL ACT

LEGISLATIVE REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF WAIVER APPLICATIONS PRIOR TO SUBMITTAL TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

After several controversial submissions of waiver applications, the General Assembly took action to significantly strengthen legislative oversight of DSS federal waiver applications in PA 05-112. It requires the Human Services and Appropriations Committees to advise DSS of their approval, rejection and modification of the waiver application within thirty days of receipt and after a public hearing on it. The committees' action will now be binding on the DSS Commissioner. If the committees reject the waiver application, the commissioner is prohibited from submitting it the federal government and must modify the application if advised to do so.

Also, in any application to the federal government, a complete transcript of the committees' proceedings, any written testimony received and any communication from the General Assembly during the public comment period must be included. Under current law, the Human Services and Appropriations Committees are permitted to "advise" the DSS Commissioner on their non-binding opinion of the application.

PA 05-112 (SB 801) - AAC LEGISLATIVE REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF WAIVER APPLICATIONS PRIOR TO SUBMITTAL TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

ESTABLISHING A LOW-INCOME ENERGY ADVISORY BOARD

We live in a world today in which we become more and more reliant on sources of energy in order to get through our day to day activities. Without access to an energy source due to a lack of income, one can become quite isolated and find it hard to perform even simple tasks. In order to keep our families from going without energy the state has now created a low-income energy advisory board. This board will work with the state legislature to help create energy assistance programs and inform the DPUC just how their energy rates will affect their customers. The Secretary of OPM will serve as the chairperson of this board and must convene the first meeting of the board by August 1st, 2005.

HB 5921 (Passed both, House A) - AA ESTABLISHING A LOW-INCOME ENERGY ADVISORY BOARD

FROG-RACE RAFFLE IN THE TOWN OF WINDHAM

In the context of Connecticut's history and literature, the General Assembly voted to permit qualified organizations throughout the state to conduct frog-race raffles, enabling the Town of Windham's fondness for frogs and frog races.

PA 05-82 (HB 5996) - AA ALLOWING THE CONDUCT OF A FROG-RACE RAFFLE IN THE TOWN OF WINDHAM